



# NEWS RELEASE

The 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of North Carolina

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**26<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT UPDATED RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

In the continued interest of the health and safety of the community and court personnel, we remain committed to balancing access to justice with the rapidly developing public health crisis that COVID-19 presents.

In addition to the March 13<sup>th</sup> directive, on March 19, 2020 Chief Justice Cheri Beasley entered an order extending filing deadlines, stating that documents due to be filed from March 16, 2020 to April 17, 2020 will be deemed timely filed if received before the close of business on April 17, 2020, and that any actions required to be done during that time can be postponed until April 17, 2020.

On March 26, 2020, Mecklenburg County implemented a "Stay at Home" Order, effective for twenty-one (21) days, directing all non-essential employees to remain home with specific exceptions. This order was entered to reduce interpersonal contacts that can facilitate the spread of COVID-19. Further modifications to the operations of the Twenty-Sixth Judicial District are necessary to both implement the "Stay at Home" Order and to protect the health and welfare of court personnel and the public. The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office will implement new protocols to ensure social distancing of six feet as much as possible in each courtroom. **These additional modifications to superior court and district court proceedings will go into effect on Monday, March 30, 2020.**

**Court offices in the Mecklenburg County Courthouse will remain open for business. However, unless you are required to appear in-person to conduct your business, attorneys and the public will not be allowed into the building and should use email and telephone to communicate with staff of the Twenty-Sixth Judicial District.** Contact information may be found on the [Judicial Directory](#).

[Online court services](#) are available for handling some court business, including citation services, paying your ticket, court payments, signing up for court date notifications and reminders, eFiling court documents for certain courts and case types, and more.

If you need to update your address with the Clerk of Superior Court's Office please send us an email at [MeckCourtHotLine@nccourts.org](mailto:MeckCourtHotLine@nccourts.org).

Accurate and timely information may be obtained from the following resources:

- Information about the North Carolina Judicial Branch system-wide response to the COVID-19 virus is available on the [NCCourts.gov website](http://NCCourts.gov).
- Information specific to Mecklenburg County courts will be available [here](#).

## CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT:

- Open to the public at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse, 832 East Fourth Street, Charlotte, North Carolina 28202, on Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9:00AM and 12:00PM.
- Operate an alternate filing site at the Magistrate's Office, 801 East Fourth Street, Charlotte, North Carolina 28202, from 12:00PM to 5:00PM on Monday through Friday for acceptance of fees and emergency filings only.
- Guardianship Hearings will be conducted as needed, subject to health precautions, including remote testimony, as determined by the Clerk of Court.
- Involuntary Commitments will be conducted as needed, subject to health precautions, including remote testimony, as determined by the Clerk of Court.
- Estates will continue to be administered by Clerk's Office staff; however, customer service lines and in-person appointments are suspended at this time.
- Estate and Special Proceeding hearings will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

## MAGISTRATE AND SMALL CLAIMS

- The Criminal Magistrate's Office located at 801 East Fourth Street will be open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and normal operations will continue for Warrants for Arrest, Magistrate's Orders, Criminal Summons, Initial Appearances, Cash Bonds / Property Bonds, Involuntary Commitment Orders, Juvenile Petitions, and Secured and Non-Secured Custody Orders.
- **Courtroom 2310** will operate from **9:00AM to 3:45PM** daily for the purpose of Involuntary Commitment Orders.
- Weddings will not be conducted at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse or at the Criminal Magistrate's Office.
- Small claim proceedings, including summary ejections and money owed, will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

## DISTRICT COURT:

- District Court sessions have been suspended for 30 days; however, the following court sessions will run in the *mornings only* as a limited exception:

### Domestic Violence Court

- **Courtroom 4110** will operate for the purpose of hearing *ex parte* Domestic Violence Protective Order (DVPO) requests and ten-day return hearings pursuant to G.S. 50B and ten-day return hearings pursuant to G.S. 50B.
- **Courtroom 4130** will operate for the purpose of hearing *ex parte* Domestic Violence Protective Order (DVPO) requests and ten-day return hearings pursuant to G.S. 50B.
- Motions to Show Cause, Motions to Modify or Set Aside, and Motions for Return of Weapons will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

### Civil District Court

- **Courtroom 4110 and 4130**
  - Emergency and time sensitive *ex parte* matters including, but not limited to: Motions for TRO, Motions to Stay Eviction, and requests for temporary No Contact Orders pursuant to the Workplace Violence Prevention Act.
  - Ten-day return hearings pursuant to G.S. 50C
  - Hearings on requests for one year Civil No-Contact Orders for which Ex Parte relief was not granted will be scheduled after April 17, 2020.
- District Court Arbitrations will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

### **Domestic Court**

- Domestic court cases will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued by the Family Court Administrator's Office.
- **Courtroom 4110** will hear all DVPO return hearings previously assigned to a Family Court Judge on the date for which it is currently scheduled. Motions to Show Cause and Motions to Modify or Set Aside will be continued and rescheduled.
- The return hearing for Emergency Custody motions in which an ex parte order has been entered will be heard in **Courtroom 8370** on *Tuesdays only*. All other emergency custody hearings will be scheduled on or after April 17, 2020.

### **Criminal District Court**

- **Courtroom 1150** will have a docket for felony bond hearings and probable cause hearings for defendants in custody. These will be handled according to an expedited administrative process for defendants who remain in custody 7 to 10 days after arrest.
- **Courtroom 1150** will operate daily for morning sessions only to hear in-custody first appearances by remote video and in-custody misdemeanor probation violation probable cause hearings on Friday mornings.
- The Judge will appoint counsel on ALL out of custody people without affidavits.
- All other criminal and traffic courts, not listed above, will be continued and rescheduled. Notice of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

### **Juvenile Abuse, Neglect & Dependency Court**

- **Courtroom 8370** will operate on Wednesdays for the purpose of conducting non-secure custody review hearings (7-Day hearings).
- All other hearings will be continued and rescheduled. Notice of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

### **Juvenile Delinquency Court**

- **Courtroom 8370** will operate on Mondays and Thursdays for the purpose of hearing detention hearings (secure custody reviews) and return indictment hearings.
- First appearances for non-detained juveniles will be calendared on or after April 17, 2020.

### **Child Support Enforcement Court**

- **Courtroom 8110** will not operate. All child support cases will be continued and rescheduled. Notice of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.
- An administrative order was entered for the 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District on March 24, 2020 staying service of outstanding orders for arrest in Child Support Contempt matters until April 17, 2020.

## **SUPERIOR COURT:**

- Superior Court sessions have been suspended for 30 days; however, the following court sessions will run as a limited exception:

### **Criminal Superior Court**

- No new jury trials (unless already empaneled in an ongoing matter as per instructions, subject to discretion of trial judge).
- **Courtroom 5310** will operate in the mornings on Fridays only for the purpose of felony bond hearings and taking pleas in expedited arraignment matters as scheduled by staff of the Trial Court Administrator's Office.
- **Courtroom 1150** will operate on Monday Afternoons for the purposes of probation probable cause and bond hearings. These will be conducted with the defendant participating remotely using video and audio technology.

**Civil Superior Court**

- No new jury trials unless already empaneled on an ongoing matter as per instructions, subject to discretion of trial judge.
- A Superior Court Judge will be available to hear emergency matters, if deemed necessary, as scheduled by staff of the Trial Court Administrator's Office.

**JURY DUTY:**

- All jurors summoned for Wednesday, March 25, 2020 through Friday, April 17, 2020 have been excused from jury service, and should not report. If you are summoned for a date *beyond* April 17, 2020, please follow the instructions on your jury summons to determine if you will be required to report.
- All grand jury proceedings have been suspended until Monday, April 20, 2020 and persons serving on the grand jury should not report.

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